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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7205
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0539
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5281
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1610
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2006

In Today's Papers

The Deadly Attack on the High Court and its Aftermath
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni
Safak and others: Over the weekend, Turkish police detained
nine suspects in connection with Wednesday's deadly attack
on the top administrative court, the Council of State
(Danistay,) in which a lawyer burst into the deliberation
room and shot dead judge Mustafa Yucel Ozbilgin and wounded
four others. One of the judges said that the gunman,
Alparslan Aslan, shouted that he was a 'soldier of God'
during the attack. The mastermind of the attack, Muzaffer
Tekin, a captain sacked from the military in 1982, was
hospitalized with a knife wound near his heart after he
reportedly attempted suicide on Saturday. Monday papers
speculate that the attacker was linked to a coalition of
extreme nationalist and Islamist groups. Police said he
also took part in the recent bomb attacks on Turkey's
staunchly secular Cumhuriyet daily.

The day after the Danistay raid and over the weekend, up to
120,000 people walked to Ataturk's mausoleum and tens of
thousands took part in a ceremony at the court in the
largest secularist protest in Ankara since those following
the 1993 car bomb killing of a newspaper columnist. The
fatal shooting brought a harsh and intense public reaction,
and angry demonstrators hurled insults and plastics bottles
at members of government who attended the funeral of Judge
Ozbilgin. Justice Minister Cemil Cicek was chased out of
the funeral ceremony by people carrying Turkish flags, and
deputy PM Abdullatif Sener was booed by protestors who also
chanted slogans against PM Erdogan.

Top government officials issued calls for common sense.
Foreign Minister Gul and Deputy Prime Minister Sener
stressed that an escalation of tensions would harm national
interests, and warned the nation against a return to the

'old days of turmoil,' saying the government had 'the power to overcome paranoia.' In Egypt's Sharm al-Sheikh over the weekend to participate in a World Economic Forum meeting, Prime Minister Erdogan said the police were close to revealing the details behind the mysterious attack. Erdogan had earlier criticized general Hilmi Ozkok, chief of Turkish General Staff, after Turkey's top general called on Turks to continue their protests in defense of secularism. 'Expecting such protests and reactions in the future and commending such actions is not the right thing to do. People holding positions of responsibility should know well what to recommend and how,' Erdogan said, referring to comments by Ozkok. Ozkok's call was seen as a warning to the government from the military, which forced an Islamist-leaning government to step down in 1997.

Erdogan Meets Zoellick, Mubarak in Egypt
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan met on Sunday with US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick on the margins of the World Economic Forum summit meetings in Sharm al Sheik. Erdogan urged Zoellick to implement a stronger mechanism against the PKK presence in northern Iraq, while Zoellick explained to the PM the structure of the new government established in Iraq. Zoellick also asked for Turkey's support to sustain Iran's relations with the IAEA. Erdogan expressed concern over the fact that the new Iraqi government has only one Turkmen minister in the new cabinet, adding that this was inappropriate in a representative system of government.

Erdogan told foreign journalists after the summit talks that

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sanctions imposed on the Palestinian Authority would only breed hatred, and described efforts to isolate the ruling Hamas party as a mistake. Erdogan likened the attempt to isolate Hamas to the way Israel and the West tried to ostracize Yasser Arafat before the 1993 Oslo peace agreements legitimized his leadership. 'We must not repeat the same mistakes we have made in the past. Condemning the people of Palestine to famine and further suffering will end up in worse repercussions,' he said. Erdogan said Turkey will provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. 'Turkey and Egypt have agreed that we have to provide aid to Palestine, because this our responsibility as a country in the Middle East,' he added. Erdogan also held a meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Sunday to discuss Iraq and other regional issues.

Turkey-US Disagree on Strategic Vision Document
Cumhuriyet wrote on Friday that Turkish and US officials had failed to agree on the final details of the strategic vision document, and that this week Turks would travel to the US to continue discussions. The Turkish side has insisted on adding to the document steps for fighting the PKK, while Washington wanted the document only to say that the US would support Turkey's struggle against the terrorist organization. The US also refused to include in the document provisions for boosting direct trade with Turkish Cyprus. Cumhuriyet expects the document to be finalized during the visit of Prime Minister Erdogan to the US.

Papadopoulos Emerges Stronger from Elections
All papers report that Cyprus President Tassos Papadopoulos' party DIKO gained ground in early results from Sunday's parliamentary election, increasing its vote to 19.4 percent from the 14.8 it scored in 2001, a sign that voters approved of his hardline policies on Turkey. Communist AKEL, a ruling coalition partner, had 31.1 percent of the vote against 30.3 for the main opposition DISI. Turkish papers say the elections marked a second failed attempt to reunify the divided island, with Hurriyet carrying a headline, 'Mr No's Election Victory.'

Turkish Day Parade in New York

All papers report that thousands of Turkish Americans joined the 25th annual Turkish Day Parade in New York over the weekend with Turkish lawmakers Mehmet Ali Sahin, Egemen Bagis, Zeynep Damla Gurel, Reha Denemec, Sukru Elekdag and Mevlut Cavusoglu participating in the parade. Sahin said he wanted to see Turks living in the US as members of the House of Representatives and Senate, so that 'Turkey can have a strong lobby group in US politics.'

Turkish Contract for Purchase of Attack Helicopters

A news-commentary in the mainstream mass appeal daily Sabah says Turkey is to decide in June on the purchase of 50 attack helicopters in which the French-German partnership Eurocopter has been competing with Russian and South African companies. Eurocopter was relieved when US firms Boeing and Bell-Textron pulled out of the Turkish state contract, citing difficult conditions with respect to technology transfer. Eurocopter CEO Fabrice Bregier said it was a relief for them to see US Apache helicopters out of the competition. However, the Americans have begun lobbying activities in Ankara again. Ankara, stuck between the EU and US companies, will have a hard time deciding the winner.

Editorial Comments

Turkish Democracy and Secularism

Ali Aslan wrote from Washington in the Islamist-oriented

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Zaman (05/22): "In the American system, no single institution of government has supremacy over the others. Instead, each institution exercises control on the others through a system of checks and balances. In this way, crises can be overcome in a short time through a culture of conciliation and a tradition of pragmatic consensus. Viewed from Washington, we can see that Turkey has not yet reached this stage of political maturity. In Turkey, one of the most important reasons for political tension is the fact that the legislative and executive authorities are more religious, while the judicial authority is more secular. So when I spoke last week to a former US Ambassador to Turkey, he said that with last week's attack against the Danistay, Turkey is entering a period in which secular-religious tensions will be intensified. In the US vision, there is a Turkey that is both secular and democratic. The Americans say this both publicly and in private. They argue that secularism and democracy are not principles that contradict one another, but rather principles that complete one another. Washington doesn't want Turkish secularism to harm its democracy, nor Turkish democracy to harm secularism. The Americans want to see a solution, including to the question of the presidential election, reached through conciliation.

Before the Issue Comes to the Agenda Again

Sami Kohen commented in the mainstream daily Milliyet (5/20): "The French Parliament did not pass the bill that would ban the denial of the Armenian Genocide. Armenians were deeply disappointed that the draft bill was not approved. Of course, this outcome is comforting for Turkey, but just for the moment. Because this draft was not rejected by a parliamentary vote. The Socialists in France could bring the issue on the agenda once again next fall. There are lessons to be learned from this latest development in the French parliament. First of all, the French government clearly stated that it did not support this bill. This shows that if the government is energetic in its opposition, it is possible to prevent the such bills from winning approval. The French government's stance also shows us that Turkey has an important place in French foreign policy. As in many other countries, Turkey failed to act in a timely way in France on the Armenian issue. But the possibility that this bill could pass the French parliament roused the Turkish government and Turkish people, and initiatives were taken to block it. This proves that with some creative

efforts, the negative sentiments about Turkey on the Armenian issue can be changed. What Turkey needs to do is to face the world with a new strategy and a new image on this issue."

TV News
(NTV, 8.00 a.m.)

Domestic News

- Foreign Minister Gul told a provincial AKP gathering the deadly attack on the Council of State (Danistay) was an attack against the state and the government, stressing that Turkey must not go back to the chaos of the past.
- Former Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit remains in a coma after being operated on following a brain hemorrhage on Friday.
- Prime Minister Erdogan told the World Economic Forum meeting on Sunday that his government plans to increase Turkey's national income to 800 billion USD by the year [2012](#).

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- This week the Turkish parliament will discuss a draft law that would task the Prime Ministry with coordinating the fight against terrorism.
- Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP co-chairman Ahmet Turk called on Prime Minister Erdogan to launch a dialogue with his party in an effort to solve the Kurdish problem.

International News

- Israeli Prime Minister Olmert warned that Iran is just a few months away from acquiring the technological know-how that will allow it to produce nuclear bombs.
- On Sunday, 55.5 of Montenegrins voted for independence, according to unofficial results. Belgrade will reportedly not object to the outcome.

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